

THE JOURNAL OF
Egyptian
Archaeology

VOLUME 94
2008

PUBLISHED BY
THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY
3 DOUGHTY MEWS, LONDON WC1N 2PG
ISSN 0307-5133


PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
COMMERCIAL COLOUR PRESS PLC,
ANGARD HOUSE, 185 FOREST ROAD,
HAINAULT, ESSEX IG6 3HX
AND PUBLISHED BY
THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY
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BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

The sounds of *ʿain* in Egyptian, Greek, Coptic, and Arabic*

A brief discussion of *ʿain* including new Coptic evidence from two unpublished letters from Kellis.

IN the various Semitic languages there is a letter named *ʿain* (which means ‘eye’ in both Hebrew and Arabic, and is arguably the source of the Greek ‘omega/omicron’), designated in the International Phonetic Alphabet by the symbol ʕ, and its hieroglyphic form is .¹ Characteristic features of the sound seem to be that its manner of articulation is approximant or fricative, which means roughly that the airflow is constricted but not always enough to produce the turbulence typical of consonants, its place of articulation is the pharynx, its phonation is voiced, and the airstream mechanism is pulmonic. It is clear from the discussion in Peust that not all of this applies to the Egyptian sound.²

According to C. Peust, largely following F. Kammerzell,³ the voiced dental consonant /d/ changed around the beginning of the Middle Kingdom into /ʕ/. He cites examples collected by Kammerzell of words where the Ancient Egyptian grapheme *ʿain* is clearly reproduced in Coptic by a dental consonant, albeit by one that looks to me like an unvoiced dental: thus, ʕ becomes **TAI** and ʕb becomes **TAΠ**, though there is the Boharic form **ϩⲏⲡ/ϩⲁⲡ**. Peust proposes an ingenious explanation of this phenomenon in n. 100 on p. 101, but carefully uses the phrase ‘for some reason or another’ in his explanation, indicating that it is still not fully clear how the sound change has come about.

The Greeks clearly heard a nasal component in the sound, because the name of *mn-k3w-r* appears in Greek, presumably based on a pronunciation familiar to them, as ‘Mykerinos’.⁴

The various dialects of Coptic reproduce *ʿain* in writing in two ways: as **ⲁ/ⲱ** and **ⲛ**. Examples of the vowel graphemes include **ⲟϣⲁ**, **ⲱⲱⲱⲧ**, **ⲱⲛⲓ** (*wʕ*, *ʕt*, and *ʕh*).⁵ The verb *ʕm* seems particularly interesting. It seems to have had two forms and two meanings: ‘swallow’ and ‘know’, which seem to overlap.⁶ The first seems to have disappeared or been ‘swallowed’ up by the second, which has survived Coptic as **ⲉⲓⲙⲉ**. One might wonder if, in fact, the first word had a different vocalization and has actually survived in Coptic as **ⲱⲙⲕ** (‘swallow’, making it a verb like **ⲛⲕⲟⲧⲕ**, which has incorporated the 2nd masculine singular pronoun into its structure).⁷

* I am grateful to the two anonymous referees for drawing my attention to the works of C. Peust and J. Ray.

¹ A much more comprehensive account can be found in C. Peust, *Egyptian Phonology: Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language* (MzÄS 2; Göttingen, 1999), 99–106.

² Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 102 argues that the sound begins to behave erratically in Roman Demotic.

³ In R. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch–Deutsch: Die Sprache der Pharaonen (2800–950 v. Chr.)* (KAW 64; Mainz, 1997), L.

⁴ J. D. Ray makes the same point in ‘Nasal Vowels in Egyptian’, *Enchoria* 8/2 (1978), 77–8 with respect to the name Khephren.

⁵ Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 101 notes that W. Schenkel connects Egyptain *wʕ*/ⲟϣⲁ with a Semitic root **wʕd**.

⁶ *Wb.* I, 183.19–184.22.

⁷ This is merely a suggestion. The etymology of this word proposed by W. Vycichl, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Leuven, 1983), 294, and W. Westendorf, *Koptisches Handwörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1977), 292 from the relatively uncommon *ʕnq* (*Wb.* I, 206.3) (‘to flood/cause to flood’) is also possible, but the connection in meaning seems to me fairly distant, and it raises the question of what happened to the relatively common *ʕm* meaning ‘swallow’.

Examples of the consonant graphemes include the largely Upper Egyptian conjugation prefix **ϣANTE-**, preserved in Bohairic as **ϣATE-** (Crum characterizes this form in Sahidic as ‘archaic’).⁸ The verb **κω** (*h3r*) in P. Bodmer VI, in its pronominal form, seems to make use of two letters, not retained in the Coptic script, which Kasser describes as having the sound values of ‘a’ and/or ‘n’.⁹ The latter sound is preserved in the writing of the pronominal form in two letters from Kellis (Dakhla Oasis):¹⁰

P. Kell. Copt. 81F, 11:

ΧΝΤΑΙΚΝ̄ΤΗΝΕ ΑΒΑΛ ΗΠΙΧΙΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

Since I left you, I have not received a letter.

P. Kell. Copt. 81E, 3:

ΤΝΜΝΤΩΒΗΡ ΝΑΚΝΤΩ ΕΝ ΑΒΑΛ

Our companionship will not leave him.

A medieval Arabic text written in Coptic letters demonstrates clearly how the sound of the Arabic ‘*ain*’ was reproduced in writing by Coptic speakers of that time.¹¹ However, what it actually sounded like is another matter: in each case, it is reproduced by the Coptic **ϣ**, an unvoiced pharyngeal fricative, which in fact is used to represent two different sounds, the ‘*ain*’ (ϣ) and the *hā*’ (ϣ), and the writer distinguishes between them by the simple expedient of writing the Arabic ‘*ain*’ over the appropriate **ϣ**.

ANTHONY ALCOCK

Bemerkungen zu zwei usurpierten Säulen aus der Zeit Merenptahs*

Two examples of reused granite columns are discussed, displaying a variety of techniques of reuse in the Ramessid Period. One column, found at Tell El Yahûdiyeh, has been misinterpreted since the end of the Nineteenth Century. The other shows a unique formulation of a monolithic column into a sculpture, in which the monolithic granite column was eventually turned upside down to produce a larger naophorus statue out of the ‘entasis’ of the six-stemmed papyrus shaft. The origin of both columns can be attributed to the royal buildings of the Fifth Dynasty, perhaps from Abusir.

GRIFFITH legte am Ende des 19. Jahrhundert in Tell el-Jahudija eine monolithische Granitsäule frei.¹ Nach seinem Bericht handle es sich hierbei um eine der Länge nach halbierte Papyrusbündelsäule von acht Stängeln, die heute in zwei Blöcken ist. Die Gesamthöhe der Säule betrug nach Griffith ca. 15 ft. Die Nachgrabung von Petrie ergab mit 172 in, also etwa 8 E. 2 Hb. 1 F., ein Maß, das mir präziser als das von Griffith erscheint.² Weiters identifizierte Petrie sie als eine von Merenptah usurpierte Säule aus einem Bauwerk der 12. Dynastie. Petrie ließ diese Säulenfragmente am Ort zurück. Bei der Nachgrabung durch du Mesnil du

⁸ Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 106 claims that **ϣANTE-** derives from the LE (*r*)-*š3r-m-dr*, while F. Junge *Einführung in die Grammatik des Neuägyptischen* (Wiesbaden, 1996) 103, not cited by Peust, gives another set of possibilities: *š3r-j.jr.t=f-sdm* > *š3r.tw=f-sdm* > *š3r-mtw=f-sdm*.

⁹ R. Kasser, *Compléments au dictionnaire copte de Crum* (BdEC 7; Cairo, 1964), x n. 3.

¹⁰ Which will appear in *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis*, II, currently being prepared by the editors of volume 1 (A. Alcock, W.-P. Funk, and I. Gardner).

¹¹ P. Casanova, ‘Un texte arabe transcrit en caractères coptes’, *BIFAO* 1 (1901), 1–20. On the ‘devoicing’ of /ʕ/ to Coptic **ϣ**, cf. Peust, *Egyptian Phonology*, 105. Peust does not cite this text, though there is a reference to it in his bibliography.

* Für die kritischen Meinungen bedanke ich mich bei Hrn. Prof. Dr. Manfred Bietak (Universität Wien), Hrn. Ao.-Prof. Dr. Erich Lehner (Technische Universität Wien) und Hrn. Prof. Dr. Shin-ichi Nishimoto (Cyber University). Hrn. Reinald Bendl (Universität Wien) und Hrn. Michael Neumann (Universität Wien) verdanke ich die grammatischen Korrekturen.

¹ F. Ll. Griffith, *The Antiquities of Tell el Yahûdiyeh, and Miscellaneous Work in Lower Egypt during the Years 1887–1888* (MEEF 7/[2]; London, 1890), 41.

² W. M. F. Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities* (BSAE 12; London, 1906), 8. Zu den Inschriften vgl. *KRI* IV, 49.